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A. L. Lucin Jr.
Jan 11-22

Joe T.



PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

A SORT OF A PLAY *in*
TWO ACTS *or thereabouts*



By
MONTAGUE GLASS
Creator of the famous characters
"Potash and Perlmutter"

822.8

65526 pr

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gift
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P R E F A C E

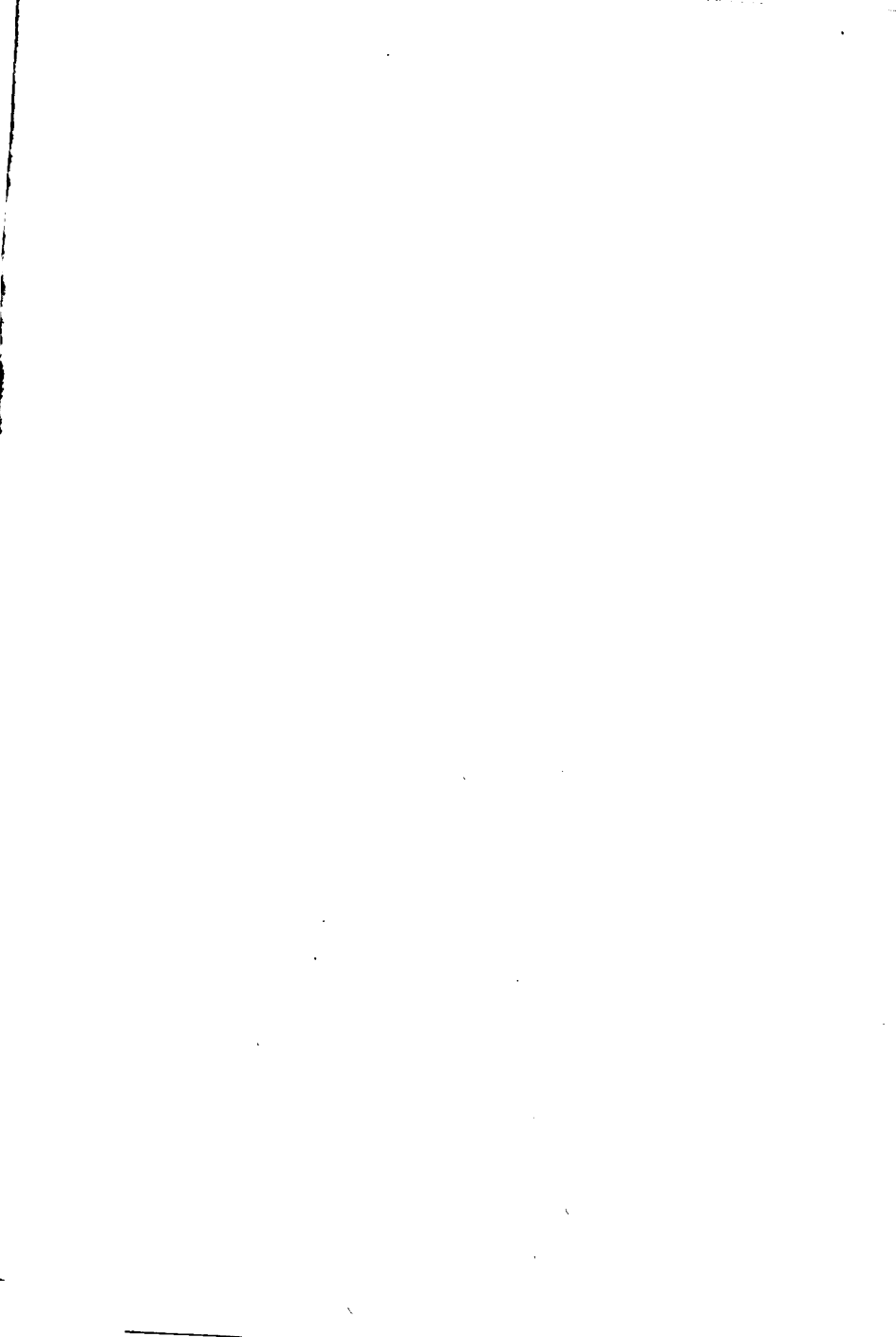
IT IS an adage of the theatre that plays which make good reading do not make good acting. Some plays make neither good acting nor good reading. Into which category this play falls, I leave to you. Should you decide upon the second, my excuse is that it is not a play at all.

"We agree with you *there*," you say, "but if it isn't a play, what *is* it?"

It is designed primarily as an entertainment to Dodge Brothers dealers.

Query: What is the moral?

Answer: That is for *you* to decide.



PERSONS OF THE PLAY

ABE POTASH - - - *A Dodge Brothers Dealer*
Mr. Barney Bernard

MORRIS PERLMUTTER
Another Dodge Brothers Dealer and Abe's Partner
Mr. Julius Tannen

ROSIE POTASH - - - - - *Abe's Wife*
Mrs. Jennie Moskowitz

GEORGE W. BLOWDEN
A District Representative for Dodge Brothers
Mr. Edwin Mordant

J. J. PLYMPTON - *A Jobber of Counterfeit Parts*
Mr. Percy G. Moore

MAX KLEIN - - - *Abe's Nephew by Marriage*
Mr. George Christie

TILLY KLEIN - - - - - *His Wife*
Miss Helen Stewart

MISS COHEN - - *A Stenographer and Bookkeeper*
Miss Eleanor Boardman

CHIEF OF POLICE - - - Mr. T. M. Cleland

FOREMAN - - - - - Mr. John Roy

ACT I—Office and Salesrooms of the
Potash-Perlmutter Company.

ACT II—The Same, Only Cleaner.

Time: Relatively The Present.

Sixty Days Elapse Between Act I and
Act II.

Direction of MR. T. M. CLELAND

NOTE:—This play especially written and produced for the Eighth Annual Meeting of Dodge Brothers Dealers in the Pennsylvania Hotel, New York City, January 10, 1922.



ACT I



ACT I

SCENE—Office and Salesroom of the Potash-Perlmutter Company in Cyprus, L. I. It has been a furniture store and funeral parlor, and looks it. At Rise, Miss COHEN, stenographer at desk, typewriting. Telephone bell rings. Miss COHEN rises and answers it.

Miss C: Potash-Perlmutter Company....Mister Who? Oh, hello, Cutie...Yeesh...You *did*...Sure... Huh! Huh! ...To-night!...Sure!...No... I don't want to go for no ride...No...I see enough of them cars in office hours....Let's go to a show afterwards....What shows did I see? I see them all except The Follies, Six Cylinder Lover, The Wheel, Tangerine, Dulcie.....

[While Miss C. is repeating these titles ABE POTASH enters. [He stands and watches her until she catches sight of him and slams the receiver on the hook.]

ABE: Miss Cohen, in future please give your telephone trade to the druggist across the street, and Miss Cohen, tomorrow morning, do me the favor and put on some more clothes. We want the customers to look at the cars, not the stenographer. *[He goes to his desk, looks at clock on wall and compares it with his watch.]* Ain't my partner down yet?

Miss C: No, Mr. Potash.

ABE: *[Shakes his head and makes incoherent noises through his nose, indicating how shocked he feels.]* Half-past nine and he ain't down yet. Any mail, Miss Cohen?

Miss C: It's on Mr. Perlmutter's desk.

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT I

ABE: Why on his desk? Ain't I a partner here?

MISS C: There they are.

ABE: N'ya! That's a business the automobile business! Half-past nine you get down and your partner ain't here yet. The stenographer dresses like a cabaret show and the mail has got nothing in it but advertisements. [*Reads letter.*] The Kankakee timer for Fords. Over three million Ford owners use it. [*Throws it into waste paper basket.*] Try the Gassler Shock Absorber for Fords. Nothing complicated about it. [*Throws it into waste paper basket.*] The Justrite Starting and Lighting System for Fords. For God's sake. Don't nobody manufacture nothing except for Fords? [*Enter MORRIS PERLMUTTER.*] A-ha. At last you are here. What did you come for—afternoon tea?

MISS C: Good morning, Mr. Perlmutter.

MORRIS: Good morning, good morning. Abe, get away from my desk. . . . And don't throw papers on the floor. You ain't at home you know. Miss Cohen. Take this. [*Hands plant to Miss Cohen.*]

ABE: What's that?

MORRIS: It's a palm.

ABE: A palm! What for?

MORRIS: To make the place look fancy.

ABE: With one palm you want to make the place look fancy?

MORRIS: If the customers like it we'll get more. Put it on the floor by the car, Miss Cohen. And don't water it. It ain't a real palm. It's a patent palm.

ACT I] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

ABE: But what do we want a patent palm for?

MORRIS: Supposing the district representative shows up here?

ABE: Well, let him show up? What do we care? So long as we got orders, what do we want with palms?

MORRIS: Didn't you see it in them sales bulletins they sent us from Detroit how W. L. Eaton of Seattle gets a prize from fixing up his salesrooms. The pictures shows he's got not only palms but asparagus plants.

ABE: For my part he could have tomato plants and cabbages. The way this place looks suits me.

MORRIS: And the way Russia looks suits Trotsky. Maybe the Dodge Brothers car is so good that people would go to buy it if it was displayed in a fish market, but as a general proposition, people go to fish markets to buy fish.

ABE: And as a general proposition they go to an automobile salesroom to see automobiles, not palms. Miss Cohen.

MISS C: Yes, Mr. Potash.

ABE: Take that palm out and water it good. Never mind if the colors do run.

MORRIS: Leave that palm alone.

ABE: But Mawruss.

MORRIS: That palm is going to stay right here. Furthermore, I've ordered two artificial rubber plants and an imitation Boston fern. They're to be delivered this morning.

ABE: And who is going to pay for all this?..... Dodge Brothers?

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT I

MORRIS: *We are.*

ABE: *We are! You mean you are. An idea! Did you ever hear the like? Palm trees he wants to put in here and I should pay for it yet.*

MORRIS: Well, ain't you a partner here?

ABE: I am a partner in the automobile business, not the palm business.

MORRIS: We got to fix up the showroom, ain't we?

ABE: An automobile showroom should be fixed up with automobiles, not palms.

MORRIS: All right, if that's the way you feel about it. Miss Cohen.

MISS C: Yes, Mr. Perlmutter.

MORRIS: When them rubber plants and that fern come tell the man to take them away again and give him that palm too. It's the last time I'll try to improve this place.

ABE: Don't do me no favors. Ain't we run into enough expenses here without turning the place into a Palm Garden. [*He is examining mail as he speaks*].

MORRIS: I know. A customer kicks about the ball thrust bearing on the clutch release collar again. Honestly, Abe, you would think that every new car owner had made a solemn promise to his mother never to turn down a grease cup.

ABE: It ain't from a customer, it's from Dodge Brothers. I wonder what them tyrants want from us now?

MORRIS: Open it and find out.

ABE: I don't have to open it to find out. It's a kick.

ACT I] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

MORRIS: How do you know?

ABE: It's from the district representative. And when we get a letter from the district representative, it's a kick.

MORRIS: Listen, are you going to open that letter to see what he does want, or are you going to stand there guessing all day?

ABE: You open it, Mawruss. I ain't got the nerve.

MORRIS: [*Reads.*]
"Dodge Brothers, Detroit, announce the appointment of Mr. George W. Blowden as District Representative in New York City. His broad experience and knowledge of the work fully qualifies him for the important post to which he is now advanced." So, that other rosher has gone.

ABE: Gone! Well—I always said that a Dodge Brothers dealer would shoot that feller *some* day. He was a nice man, but he didn't give a damn about nothing but Saturday Night Reports.

MORRIS: What are you talking about—Saturday Night Reports. This announcement says the old district representative is gone to Chicago.

ABE: To Chicago. Poor feller.

MORRIS: And that they've got a new district representative in New York, and here is his picture on the announcement.

ABE: What! Is *that* the new district representative?

MORRIS: Who did you think it was—Gillette of the Gillette Safety Razor?

ABE: Well, it don't look unlike Gillette—William J. Douglas neither.

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT I

MORRIS: Well, anyhow, maybe he wouldn't take it so particular about the House to House Canvassing. If that other district representative had stayed on the job much longer he would of worried me into my *grave* with that house to house canvassing.

ABE: House to house canvassing! Huh! That's an occupation for a human being!

MORRIS: And what good has all that house to house canvassing been to us anyway?

ABE: I don't know. We ain't never done any yet.

MORRIS: And we ain't going to neither. Wait till I see that new district representative. I'll tell him a few things. Them district representatives come to a dealer which he has lived all his life in the town where he sells cars, and they think they know more about the dealer's neighbors than he does himself.

ABE: Well, say that to him when he comes here.

MORRIS: Do you think I'm afraid to say it to him?

ABE: Oh no, you ain't afraid to say it to him. You ain't no more scared of a district representative than a rabbit is of a bulldog.

MORRIS: And how about *you*? The last time the district representative called you acted like you were shell shocked.

ABE: The old district representative was something else again, but this here new district representative looks easy.

MORRIS: How can you tell from this *how* he looks? It's so smudged it looks like four or five different people.

ACT I] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

ABE: Well they *all* look easy, so don't be afraid to talk up to him.

MORRIS: Don't worry, I'll talk what's in my mind.

ABE: And in mine too.

MORRIS: "Mr. Blowden," I'll say to him, "of course you're new on the job," I'll say, "so let me give you a few pointers," I'll say. "You are the district representative, but we are the dealers," I'll say, "and if you look after *your* business, we'll attend to ours."

ABE: Good. Let him know where he stands right from the start.

MORRIS: After that, I'll hand him a few digs about uniform accounting system. "A uniform accounting system is all right for *some* people," I'll tell him, "*but* Mr. Blowden," I'll tell him, "my partner and me was keeping books before Haskins and Sells could pay their laundry bills."

ABE: Right!

MORRIS: And as for roadside bulletins.

ABE: Wait! Let *me* tell him about the roadside bulletins. Just let that new district representative open his mouth to me once about roadside bulletins, and I will say to him, "Blowden," I will say, I wouldn't even call him Mister neither, "we ain't Haskins and Sells," I will say, "and maybe we don't know nothing about figuring costs, and maybe we do, but if them roadside bulletins cost you people six dollars and fifty cents, I'll eat them."

MORRIS: And how about that perpetual inventory stuff?

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

[ACT I

ABE: I'm coming to that. Listen here, I'm going to say, and I wouldn't even call him by name, listen here, I'll say, "What the devil do you mean by it? What? Don't you suppose we know how to run our own business? A district representative you call yourself, a nuisance you are, *that's* what you are, and furthermore what do *we* care for district representatives? To us district representatives are nix. We don't give a nickel for the biggest district representative because"

[During the above speech MAX KLEIN has entered and he stands and listens to it for a few seconds before Morris sees him. Morris tries to give Abe a look but Abe only stops speaking when he himself sees Klein.]

Nu! What *is* it?

KLEIN: Mr. Potash.

ABE: That's me.

KLEIN: I guess you don't recognize me, because you've only seen my picture.

MORRIS: Picture! Abe, give me that announcement. Murderer! *[To Klein]* How do you do, sir. We're very glad to see you, sir. Give him a chair, Chommer!

ABE: Sit down here, sir. We was just talking about you, me and my partner.

KLEIN: About me?

MORRIS: Not when you just come in. That was about somebody else. Abe, get the cigars. Well, how does it seem to be living in New York now?

KLEIN: I like it first rate.

ABE: And New York will like you. With one look at you, I can tell that wherever you go, you will be welcome. Take that cigar there. It's a Corona. I got it at a wedding only last month.

ACT I] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

KLEIN: Thank you.

MORRIS: Not at all. [*To Abe*] Got it at a wedding. Schlemiel! Have a light.

KLEIN: Thank you.

MORRIS: Abe, ain't you got no better matches than these?

ABE: How did you come over here from New York, by train or by automobile?

KLEIN: By automobile.

MORRIS: I suppose you noticed our roadside bulletins?

KLEIN: Well, I can't say that I did.

MORRIS: You didn't! Abe. Didn't you tell that man to put up them roadside bulletins?

ABE: What man?

MORRIS: What man! Why that man we *always* get to put up our roadside bulletins. [*Aside to Abe.*] Lunatic, what's the matter with you?

ABE: Oh, *that* man. Oh yes, sure I told him.

MORRIS: And I think it was fifty roadside bulletins he put up.

ABE: Fifty-six.

MORRIS: Somewheres around fifty. I don't want to exaggerate, but we'll say fifty-two.

KLEIN: You've got a nice place here, Mr. Potash.

ABE: It ought to be nice. It used to be a funeral parlor.

KLEIN: A funeral parlor.

MORRIS: He means a furniture store. Funeral parlor! What are you trying.....?

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT I

ABE: Well, the owner was an undertaker, wasn't he?

MORRIS: Undertaker! He was the shammass of a church, and once in a while when furniture was a little quiet, he took on a funeral. Excuse me, that cigar don't draw good.

KLEIN: It's all right.

MORRIS: Try this one. It's not so dry.

KLEIN: This smokes fine.

MORRIS: Stick it in your pocket and smoke it after a while.

ABE: [*Looking at announcement.*] Ain't it a quincidence that we should get this announcement not ten minutes before you came in here.

KLEIN: Why, we mailed the announcements last month.

MORRIS: Last month! Abe, what is the date on that announcement?

ABE: What's the difference what the date is; but the picture on it, I must say it don't look like you in the least.

KLEIN: The picture on it?

ABE: It don't flatter you. It makes you look older and it ain't so good looking.

KLEIN: But we didn't put any pictures on the announcement. All the announcements gave was our names, and the date of the marriage.

MORRIS: Marriage. What marriage?

KLEIN: My marriage; and I promised Mommer when we left Saint Louis that I would call and see you.

ACT I] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

MORRIS: You promised Mommer? Abe, who is this faker?

ABE: Now I know you. You're Max Klein and you married my wife's sister's a daughter by the name Tillie Schupnik, ain't it?

KLEIN: That's right.

ABE: Mawruss, you heard me talk about Max Klein.

MORRIS: How do you do, excuse me. That cigar will break there. Abe, I am going into the service station. Don't interrupt me unless somebody comes that amounts to something. . . An idea! Corona Coronas ain't good enough for such a feller Chutzpah! [*Exit MORRIS into service station.*]

ABE: You've got to excuse my partner that he is such a crank. Business ain't none too good for us just now.

KLEIN: Why, I thought there was always a market for Dodge Brothers cars.

ABE: None better, and if we was only in this business we'd be all right.

KLEIN: But Dodge Brothers dealers can't handle other lines, can they?

ABE: Sshh! [*Nodding toward where the stenographer is sitting.*] The fact is we have got twenty thousand dollars invested in a garment business in Cleveland. It's all we have outside this business.

KLEIN: And isn't the garment business going?

ABE: It's going fast. My partner's brother-in-law is in charge of it, but you've got to look after those things yourself. Unless we could go out there and change things over, we would soon kiss ourselves good-bye with that twenty thousand dollars.

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

[ACT I

KLEIN: Well, I can cheer you up a little anyhow. I came out here especially to buy a car from you.

ABE: What?

KLEIN: I understood you were selling the Cadillac, but I might change my mind and buy a Dodge.

ABE: Max, listen to me, it's against the rules for selling Dodge Brothers cars that I say this, but when it comes to comparing a Cadillac and a Dodge, what is there to compare? Miss Cohen, go quick and tell Mr. Perlmutter to come in here. Well, well, well, so you was going to buy a Cadillac. I'm glad you come here while there was still time.

KLEIN: But I thought the Cadillac was a good car.

ABE: Of course it's a good car, but the Dodge Brothers car is a *car*, Max. Why would you believe me, Max, if someone would give me my choice between a Rolls Royce and a Dodge, Max, I would take the Dodge, because when it comes to comfort in riding, Max, you could turn turtle in a Dodge and it wouldn't cripple you like the upkeep of a Rolls Royce. [MORRIS enters.]

MORRIS: Now listen, Abe, let me tell you once and for all, I ain't got no time to waste on your wife's relations.

ABE: He's just like that, Max, always kidding.

MORRIS: What do you mean—kidding?

ABE: We are all the time jollyng backwards and forwards about our wife's relations, so don't pay no attention to him. Just tell him what type of car you want to buy, that's all.

ACT I] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

MORRIS: Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! He knows me like a book, Mr. Klein. Abe, Mr. Klein's cigar is out. Take this fresh one here.

KLEIN: Thank you.

MORRIS: Sit down, sit down. How did you leave Mrs. Klein? She must be lonely in Saint Louis without you.

KLEIN: She isn't in Saint Louis. I left her at the hotel here while I went round trying to find you.

MORRIS: You see, Abe. What did I tell you? He comes from New York by car and there ain't one roadside bulletin out to let him know where we are. There should be a sign a mile between here and New York.

ABE: Well, is that *my* fault?

MORRIS: For all anyone could tell, we ain't in business here at all.

ABE: Did I say we shouldn't put out them roadside bulletins?

MORRIS: Tomorrow morning first thing, you will get them roadside bulletins up.

ABE: I will get them up.

MORRIS: *We* will get them up. And I want Mr. and Mrs. Klein they should come up to the house and have lunch with me.

ABE: With you *nothing*. They are going to have lunch with me. Rosie would never forgive me if I didn't bring 'em round. I only live a few blocks away.

KLEIN: I'm sorry, but I can't go to lunch with either of you. I'm going over to the hotel and bring my wife right over here. And as soon as we get the business of buying this car over, we must go straight back to New York.

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT I

MORRIS: Well, you must come out again some time.

ABE: Sure he will. He'll have lunch with both of us, one after the other. You should ought to taste Mrs. Perlmutter's cooking—pretty near as good as my Rosie's.

MORRIS: What do you mean pretty near as good? My wife is a wonderful cook, Mr. Klein.

ABE: Did I say she wasn't? But she could cook only fifty per cent as good as my Rosie's and *still* be a wonderful cook. You should ought to taste the gefüllte Miltz my wife makes. N-yah! At Delmonico's you couldn't get it. Come round the next time you are in New York and you shall have some.

KLEIN: I will, thank you. And now if you don't mind I'll go over and get my wife.

MORRIS: Sure, sure. Go ahead, Mr. Klein.

ABE: We'll be here waiting for you. Don't you worry.

KLEIN: I'll be back in five minutes. [*Exit KLEIN.*]

ABE: That's a fine young man. There's a feller has got a face honest and open like the day. He looks like a decent, respectable, kind gentleman and you mistake him for a Dodge Brothers District Representative yet.

MORRIS: I mistook him for one. Didn't you hand him a Corona Corona?

ABE: Well *you* compared him with the picture, not *me*.

MORRIS: Is that *my* fault that this picture looks like practically everybody? Could I smell it from this picture that he is your wife's sister's a daughter's husband? What am I—a bloodhound?

ACT I] **PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED**

ABE: And then the way you acted to him when he comes here to buy a car.

MORRIS: Could I suspect in a million years that any of your wife's relations has got money enough to buy a car—they bankrupts and schnorrers.

ABE: Say! Say! When it comes to wife's relations, Mawruss, when did you hear last from that brother-in-law of yours, Sam Lucas, out in Cleveland?

MORRIS: Say what are you worrying your head about that business out in Cleveland? Our money is as safe there as if it would be in a bank.

ABE: All banks ain't safe, and if your brother-in-law, Sam Lucas, was president of the bank, that wouldn't make it the Bank of England neither.

MORRIS: What's the matter with my brother-in-law?

ABE: You know what's the matter with him. He's a crook, that's what's the matter with him.

MORRIS: Now listen, you said that before, and just because a man is divorced from his wife, that don't make him a crook.

ABE: Well, it don't make him a gentleman neither. Furthermore if a businessman would attend to his business, he wouldn't have no time to give his wife grounds for a divorce. *Nu, who's this?*
[Enter JOHN PLYMPTON.]

PLYMPTON: Good morning.

ABE: Good morning, good morning.

PLYMPTON: Is this Mr. Potash?

ABE: Yes, sir, and this is my partner, Mr. Perlmutter.

PLYMPTON: How do you do, sir.

MORRIS: How do you do.

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT I

ABE: Will you have a cigar, Mister er—

MORRIS: Wait a minute. Don't jump on conclusions so fast. [*To Plympton*] Do you mind stepping over here to the light for a second?

PLYMPTON: To the light. . . . what for?

MORRIS: I want to compare you with this picture!

PLYMPTON: Say, what are you two birds driving at?

ABE: Birds! What kind of a language is that for a district representative?

PLYMPTON: What are you talking about—district representative—

MORRIS: Abe, put them cigars in the desk and keep them there. You've got district representative on the brain. If you are going to hand out cigars to everybody you think is a district representative, we might as well open a United Cigar Store here.

ABE: Well, if he ain't a district representative, what *is* he?

PLYMPTON: My name is John Plympton. I've got a supply store in Jersey.

MORRIS: And you want to sell us *what*?

PLYMPTON: Are you gentlemen in the market for spare parts for Dodge cars?

ABE: If we were, we know where we could get them.

PLYMPTON: Where?

MORRIS: Where! Why, Detroit, Michigan, from Dodge Brothers, the manufacturers.

PLYMPTON: Well if you bought spare parts from me instead of them do you know what it would cost you?

ACT I] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

ABE: Sure we do. It would cost us our franchise, this business, several thousand dollars and a petition in bankruptcy.

PLYMPTON: Not if the parts was genuine Dodge Brothers spare parts.

MORRIS: And who's going to guarantee that?

PLYMPTON: I will.

MORRIS: But who's going to guarantee *you*?

PLYMPTON: Sam Lucas, your partner's brother-in-law.

ABE: So you are a friend of Sam Lucas, are you? And who is going to guarantee Sam Lucas?

MORRIS: All right, Abe, you've said enough about Sam Lucas. Suppose he did have the misfortune to have trouble with his wife.

ABE: Well, is that any reason why we should have the misfortune to have trouble with Dodge Brothers?

MORRIS: Will Sam vouch for these spare parts being genuine?

PLYMPTON: I've got a letter of introduction from Sam. Here it is.

MORRIS: Let me see it. [*He takes letter and reads it.*]

PLYMPTON: Sam and I went to school together out in Indianapolis, and I want to tell you, Mr. Potash, that a whiter, squarer feller than Sam Lucas never lived.

MORRIS: [*Looking up from letter.*]
He speaks very highly of you, too.

ABE: Maybe they're *both* mistaken.

MORRIS: What are you trying to do—insult this gentleman?

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT I

ABE: Say, anybody can make a mistake about a feller who was smart in school. Some of the best spellers is the worst crooks.

MORRIS: Well that lets *you* out, because your spelling is rotten enough to make you a safe deposit vault. Now then, Mr. Plympton, what do you want for those parts?

PLYMPTON: Here is my price list.

ABE: But, Mawruss, can we afford to take a chance like this?

PLYMPTON: You ain't taking any chance. These are genuine Dodge Brothers parts, sold to the French Government by the United States Army, and I bought them direct from the French Government.

ABE: And how do we know that? Take my advice, Mawruss and leave them alone. We used to get stuck with French dresses, why should we now get stuck with French parts?

MORRIS: Listen, Abe, will you please keep quiet and leave this to me. Do you suppose for a minute that Sam Lucas would introduce this gentleman to us if he wasn't reliable. And besides his prices are fifty per cent of Dodge Brothers.

PLYMPTON: Just about.

MORRIS: Then leave the list here, Mr. Plympton, and I'll mail you my order this afternoon.

PLYMPTON: Thank you, Mr. Perlmutter. I'll guarantee prompt deliveries, and I'm sure you'll find everything all right. Good day, Mr. Perlmutter.

MORRIS: Good day, sir, good day.

ACT I] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

PLYMPTON: Good day, Mr. Potash. [*Exit PLYMPTON.*]
[*Abe is plainly worried.*]

MORRIS: Nu, Abe, that way you are looking, somebody could come in here and think it is *still* a funeral parlor.

ABE: Mawruss, don't this Dodge Brothers dealers' franchise mean nothing to you?

MORRIS: It means as much to me as it means to you.

ABE: Then don't order them parts.

MORRIS: Why not?

ABE: Because Dodge Brothers stand for a lot of things from dealers, but there's one thing they won't stand for, and that's counterfeit parts.

MORRIS: Don't you suppose I know that, and do you think if these parts are counterfeit I would keep them?

ABE: But if there's any doubt about it, don't let them be delivered here at all. Suppose we're out when they come, and the foreman puts 'em into stock?

MORRIS: Then we'll take 'em *out* of stock.

ABE: And suppose the district representative finds them before we get 'round to taking them out of stock.

MORRIS: Now listen, you're worrying over nothing.

ABE: Nothing! Is it nothing if we get in Dutch with Dodge Brothers? Suppose we lose this franchise, what have we got to fall back on?

MORRIS: That garment business in Cleveland.

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

[ACT I

ABE: And what is that for such a fall. We are tight rope walkers performing over a spider's web. Last month we lost two thousand dollars in Cleveland; the month before that, three thousand. Don't kid yourself, Mawruss, if we would ever have to fall back on that business, we wouldn't stop falling till we reached the sub-cellar. [*Automobile horn outside.*] [*MISS COHEN enters.*]

Hah! Here come them people now.

MORRIS: Well, go out and meet them. Show *some* interest.

ABE: And you come too. Let 'em *think* you know how, even if you don't.

MORRIS: Know how to *what*?

ABE: [*Adlibbing off.*] To *anything*. Sell goods. Be polite. *Anything!*

MORRIS: [*Adlibbing off.*] Be polite, *sagt er* and if I wouldn't be polite around here.

[*Exit ABE and MORRIS to street. Miss Cohen rushes to window to see what they're going out for and enter GEORGE W. BLOWDEN, District Representative, from service station.*]

BLOWDEN: Are either of the firm in?

MISS C: They just stepped outside for a minute. Who shall I say wants to see them?

BLOWDEN: I guess they'll know me without your saying. And if they don't, that's all right too.

MISS C: Are they expecting you?

BLOWDEN: Sooner or later. Don't they ever clean up around here?

MISS C: We have a colored man in every two weeks.

ACT I] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

BLOWDEN: It looks it. Why haven't they got any service station sign out?

MISS C: I don't know. Ask 'em yourself. Here they come now. [*Voices heard off stage. Blowden sits down backstage and during the following dialogue he seems to grow impatient. He there-upon converses with Miss Cohen in pantomime.*]

ABE: [*Off stage.*] I should say it's a nice place.

MRS. K: And so convenient to get in.

MORRIS: After you get to it. [*TILLY enters.*]

ABE: Once you find the way it ain't hard to reach. [*The rest enter.*] Look out for that car there, Tilly. It may be a bit of transmission grease on that wheel there. My, My, My, so this is little Tilly that was.

MRS. K: How old was I when you saw me last?

ABE: Eight years old, and what a change there is in you. You're grown, Tilly, I must say.

MORRIS: What did you expect? A married lady should look eight years old. Sit down *please*.

MAX K: Thank you.

ABE: And how's the Mommer?

MRS. K: She's fine.

ABE: And the Popper still runs the cigar stand in that big building there?

MRS. K: Still at it.

ABE: You remember Charles Shupnik, Mawruss. The brother is Shupnik & Block in the coatpad business.

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

[ACT I

MORRIS: Is *that* the Shupnik? Why, I've known your father for years already.

[Blowden apparently asks Miss Cohen to tell Potash & Perlmutter that he wants to see them and she comes downstage.]

KLEIN: He's a great character.

MORRIS: He certainly is. In the old days when I used to make Saint Louis, Mr. Klein, your father would sooner play auction pinochle than eat.

MRS. K: And he still does.

ABE: For fifty years more *umberufen*. *[To Miss Cohen]* Yes, what *is* it?

MISS C: There's a gentleman wants to see you.

ABE: Well, let him wait. We're busy here. *[To Mrs. Klein]* Tell me, Tilly, is your father's brother Jake still living in Saint Louis?

MRS. K: I should say he is.

ABE: Mawruss, could that feller play the pianner. Like Mischa Elman! I'll never forget, one day we was down to see him for Sunday night supper and.....Miss Cohen, for Heaven's sake, what are you standing?

MISS C: He says he's got to go back to New York in half an hour.

MORRIS: Well, let him go. Who's stopping him?

MISS C: But he wants to speak to you just a minute.

ABE: He couldn't speak to us now not for a second. Wait, I'll fix him. *[Crosses to Blowden.]* What is it you want?

[Morris and the two Kleins converse about car in undertones.]

BLOWDEN: Is this Mr. Perlmutter?

ACT I] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

ABE: This is Mr. Potash. And I couldn't speak to you now.

BLOWDEN: Mr. Perlmutter is busy too, I suppose.

ABE: What do you mean suppose? Can't you *see* he's busy. He's selling a car.

BLOWDEN: Excuse me. I thought these were just some friends.

ABE: Couldn't you sell a car to somebody and *still* be friends?

MORRIS: [*Calls from across stage.*] Abe, will you please come over here for a minute? Never mind that feller.

ABE: Couldn't wait a couple minutes even. I suppose you want us to buy something what?

BLOWDEN: That's all right. Take your time. My business can wait.

ABE: Sure it can wait. It's got to wait. Miss Cohen!

MISS C: Yes, Mr. Potash.

ABE: Don't interrupt us again not for anybody. Do you understand?

MISS C: Yes, Mr. Potash.

ABE: All right, Mawruss. I'm through with this feller.

MORRIS: Good.

ABE: Now let's see. Where *was* we when he butted in here. Oh, yes Max, you said you was thinking of buying a Dodge.

MORRIS: A Dodge Brothers.

ABE: I call it a Dodge.

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

[ACT I

MORRIS: But the Dodge people's rule is you should call a Dodge a Dodge Brothers.

ABE: And if the Cadillac people's rule was you should call a Cadillac a Detroit Cadillac Motor Company of Detroit, Michigan, touring car, it would take all day to fill out a check for the purchase price. Anyhow, Mawruss, this lady is my niece and I don't mince matters with her. I would call a Dodge a Dodge.

MRS. K: That's right, Uncle Abe.

KLEIN: And now there are just one or two questions I would like to ask about your car.

MORRIS: Ask them, and we wouldn't lie to you. All the bluffs a salesman throws about a four thousand dollar car is the absolute honest truth about a Dodge.

KLEIN: Well, how many miles do you get to a gallon of gas?

ABE: Max, the rules of the Dodge Brothers is that we shouldn't claim no particular number of miles to a gallon of gas, but I'll tell you this much, Max; the last car we sold, the customer got so many miles to the gallon that he brought the car back three times and claimed the speedometer didn't work right.

KLEIN: And how about tires?

MORRIS: We ain't allowed to make no claims for tires, because you can't guarantee tires nowadays. So many people is throwing empty bottles out of automobiles.

ABE: But even at that, we claim more mileage for tires on Dodges around New York where everybody has got it on the hip, than you would get with a Franklin in Zion City, Illinois.

ACT I] **PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED**

KLEIN: Well is there any particular trouble that develops in this car?

ABE: In a Dodge? Why, Max, I'm surprised to hear you say that. We've got wonderful ball thrust bearings on the clutch release collar.

MORRIS: Did he say anything about the clutch release collar?

ABE: Did I say he did? And anyhow, Max, any engine will pass oil and will smoke if you don't use the right kind of oil.

MORRIS: Abe, what are you . . . Did you ever hear . . . Who is talking about the car smoking?

KLEIN: Of course I know it isn't a ten thousand dollar car.

MORRIS: I should say not. A manufacturer of a ten thousand dollar car can get away with murder because so few people owns such a car that if anything is wrong with it, it remains practically confidential.

ABE: Whereas, Max, if there was any secret trouble with a Dodge, six hundred and fifty thousand Dodge owners would be in the secret.

MORRIS: As a matter of fact, Mr. Klein, it ain't the Dodge owner that's got trouble with the Dodge car, it's the Dodge dealer.

ABE: Why, Max, Dodge Brothers has got more rules for selling cars than Hoyle has for playing pinochle. For instance, Tilly, if Dodge Brothers district representative should find out that we are selling you a Dodge car to use in Saint Louis, he would raise, excuse me, Hell.

MAX: But we expect to live in Newark, New Jersey.

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT I

ABE: Newark either, and it wouldn't make a bit of difference that you are practically my own flesh and blood. I would have to refer you to the Newark dealer.

MORRIS: Well, we can fix that easy. Miss Cohen.

MISS C: Yes, Mr. Perlmutter.

MORRIS: Where is that map and tack affair that district representative made us get?

MISS C: Here it is, Mr. Perlmutter.

MORRIS: Why didn't you hang it up and stick the tacks into it like I told you?

MISS C: You didn't say where I should stick the tacks.

MORRIS: Stick them anywheres. What's the difference? We'll hang it over there on that nail.
[Morris proceeds to stick blue tacks into it.]

MRS. K: What's that?

ABE: That's a map of this town made by a city surveyor and stands us in twenty-five dollars. And every place where you see a blue tack, that's where a Dodge owner lives. Put a few over there on the left, Mawruss. It's a swamp and there's nothing there except the packing plant, but the district representative wouldn't know that.

MORRIS: And now, Mrs. Klein, here is a nice blue tack I am reserving for your car. Where would you like to live?

ABE: Stick it in the middle of the First Presbyterian Church, Mawruss. That's a good place.

MRS. K: But if we live over in Newark and the Dodge Brothers find it out, maybe my husband would have to pay a commission or something.

ACT I] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

MORRIS: Not a chance in the world.

ABE: And besides, how are they going to find it out? Do you suppose we're going to *tell* them you live in Newark?

KLEIN: That'll be all right, Tilly.

MORRIS: Sure it'll be all right. I'll stick that blue tack in right where he lives, and I'll put in that address in the order blank. Miss Cohen.

MISS C: Yes, Mr. Perlmutter.

MORRIS: Make out an order for the sale of one touring car to Mr. Max Klein and put in as the address the house where Mr. Potash lives.

ABE: And if anyone from the district representative's office investigates it, you and Tilly are coming over to see us and take dinner with us so often, Max, that I can tell him you practically live at my house.

TILLY: Thank you, Uncle Abe.

ABE: Don't mention it. By golly, Mawruss, we never made an easier or a quicker sale since we been Dodge Brothers dealers.

MORRIS: And if there's anything else we could do for you, Mr. Klein, just let us know that's all.

KLEIN: Well, there's only one thing I wanted to talk about and that is the old car.

MORRIS: What old car?

KLEIN: *My* old car. It's a Putnam Four.

ABE: A Putnam Four. I never heard tell of it.

KLEIN: It was very popular car a few years ago in Saint Louis.

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT I

ABE: Maybe it was, a few years ago in Saint Louis, but so far the news ain't leaked to New York.

MRS. K: It was a splendid car. Some of the happiest days of my life I spent in that car.

MORRIS: Well, why don't you keep it to remember them by?

ABE: That's right, Max. I wonder you have the heart to dispose of it?

MAX: But I can't keep it if I'm going to buy a new car.

MORRIS: You mean you want to trade it in for the new Dodge Brothers?

MAX: Well I figure I should get five hundred dollars for it.

MORRIS: Five Hundred dollars?

MAX: Sure.

MORRIS: Abe, take that blue tack out of the map from the place where you live and put it back in the box. We may need it again some time.

ABE: Wait a minute, Mawruss, just because you and me never heard of a car, that don't say it ain't worth five hundred dollars.

MORRIS: Maybe not, but for five hundred dollars we've got difficulty getting rid of cars second hand that was popular last year in New York, let alone some years ago in Saint Louis.

ABE: But he didn't say he *wanted* five hundred dollars for it. He said he *figured* on getting it, and whatever you figure on getting for a second hand car, it don't make no difference how much you figure you can get for it, you can always figure that you wouldn't get it.

ACT I] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

KLEIN: Well, I might take a hundred dollars less.

MORRIS: Where *is* the car now?

KLEIN: It's outside.

ABE: Mawruss, it can't do us no harm to go and look at it.

MORRIS: It can if *you* look at it. All somebody has got to do is to show you a typewriter on wheels and right away you are willing to allow him a couple of hundred dollars on it.

BLOWDEN: Excuse me, gentlemen, but perhaps I can help you out about that car.

ABE: *You* can.

BLOWDEN: I've had quite a little experience in handling second hand cars.

MORRIS: So. You are one of them gyp dealers, huh?

ABE: And this is what you are hanging around for.

BLOWDEN: Well, I can give you an appraisal on that car if you want me to.

ABE: But we *don't* want you to.

MORRIS: Furthermore we dispose of our own second hand cars.

KLEIN: Shall we go out and look at it?

MRS. K: Come on, Uncle Abe.
[*Exit KLEIN and MRS. KLEIN.*]

MORRIS: [*To Blowden.*] There's no use your waiting there if you've got some gyp proposition to make to us.

ABE: We do our own gypping.
[*Adlibbing as they go out.*]

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT I

MORRIS: [Yes, you do your own gypping. You don't gyp, you get gypped.]

ABE: [The last time didn't I tell you, Mawruss.]

MORRIS: [You told me. Didn't I tell you that...]

[After they leave, Blowden rises and crosses to map. He begins to pull out tacks, one by one, and drop them in a box. Takes down a badly written sign. Off stage honking of a wheezy horn and calling of:]

Not this way, *that* way.

Now altogether. Turn the wheel. Turn it!
[Indicating that they are about to bring in Klein's car. Doors open on side and ABE, MORRIS and KLEIN push in the Putnam Four. They are followed by MRS. KLEIN.]

MRS. K: Well, wasn't I right?

MORRIS: What right?

MRS. K: Isn't it a good looking car? We drove all the way from Saint Louis in it.

MORRIS: You drove all the way from Saint Louis in it? Aren't you sure you weren't *towed* all the way from Saint Louis in it?

KLEIN: It's in first class condition considering its mileage.

ABE: Tell me, Max, did you say you paid a thousand dollars for this car *five* years ago, or five dollars for this car a *thousand* years ago?

KLEIN: Why what's the matter with the car?

MORRIS: The license plates are in good condition.

KLEIN: The engine's in good condition, too.

ACT I] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

ABE: I heard it running outside, and I guess it's got hardening of the arteries or something.

KLEIN: Look it over and see what you think of it.

MORRIS: Abe, lift the hood on that side and I'll lift it on this.
 [Business of them both lifting hood and Abe's fingers get jammed.]

ABE: Look out what you are doing.

MORRIS: Look out yourself. You are always jamming your fingers.

MRS. K: Does it hurt, Uncle Abe? Let me see.

MORRIS: Ach, it's nothing.

ABE: Nothing he says, and if he gets a blood blister he sends for a skin specialist.

MORRIS: Yes? Well, a mechanical genius like you shouldn't monkey with a safety pin except under ether. Oy-eee! Some engine. Looks like a housefurnishing department in a five and ten cent store.

ABE: Max, when you want to adjust the carburetor, what do you do? Take off the radiator first?

MORRIS: And look at all that wiring. What is it for? A burglar alarm?

KLEIN: That's for the starting and lighting systems. They're separate.

ABE: Separate, hey? That means every time you touch the lighting system you start something, but the starting system wouldn't start *anything*.

MORRIS: And you figured on getting five hundred dollars for this gas meter! Abe, call the foreman and ask him to shove it out again.

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

[ACT I

ABE: Now just a minute. Let's be serious, Max. What is the lowest figure you want for this phonograph?

KLEIN: Well you've seen it. I want to buy a Dodge. You want to sell a Dodge. Now what will you allow me?

MORRIS: We'll allow you to leave it here till the junk-man calls, and that's no small favor.

KLEIN: How about three hundred dollars?

MORRIS: Not three hundred nickels.

KLEIN: Then we'll say two hundred dollars.

MORRIS: It ain't a matter of bargaining, Mr. Klein. If we could get two hundred we would allow you that much, but who would pay two hundred for such a broken down cash register.

ABE: Max, listen to reason. If we was Albertson of Los Angeles, maybe we could sell it for fifty dollars to a moving picture outfit for running it off a cliff or into a railroad train. But here on Long Island we couldn't give it away with an extra tire and tube.

KLEIN: [*Looks at his watch.*] Now look here, Tilly and I have just got time to catch a train to New York. If you want to do business, speak quick. Allow me a hundred dollars on the car, and you can bring me the order blank to the Pennsylvania Hotel tonight. Now what do you say?

ABE: Well, Mawruss, how about it?

MORRIS: It's practically canceling our profit on the transaction.

ABE: But as a favor to me, Mawruss.

MORRIS: All right.

ACT I] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

ABE: And when you buy another Dodge next year, Max, we'll make it up.

MAX: I don't doubt it. Well, good-bye, Uncle Abe.

ABE: Good-bye, Max. Good-bye Tillie.

TILLIE: Good-bye, good-bye.

MAX: Good-bye, Mr. Perlmutter.

MORRIS: Good-bye. You've stuck us and you've stuck us good. We'll never get rid of that car. [*He follows them to the door and closes it after them.*]

Miss Cohen, write to that school teacher that we've got just the car she's been looking for.

ABE: Tell her it's in A number one condition for a hundred dollar car and she can have it for \$75.

MORRIS: A car which is in A number one condition for a hundred dollar car will not fool even a school teacher. Abe [*nods his head sideways in direction of Blowden*], find out what he wants.

ABE: Find out yourself what he wants. What *am* I—an office boy here?

MORRIS: [*To Blowden.*] Nu, what *is* it?

BLOWDEN: Let me get this straight. You're Mr. Perlmutter.

MORRIS: You've been sitting here half an hour and if you ain't found out in that time that my name is Perlmutter, you must be some wide awake gyp.

BLOWDEN: Then this gentleman must be Mr. Potash.

ABE: He's a mind reader.

BLOWDEN: Well, I'm glad to know you gentlemen. My name is Blowden.

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT I

MORRIS: Blowden! Abe! Get Mr. Blowden a chair. Mind reader! Murderer! Have a cigar, Mr. Blowden? Abe, get the cigars, what's the matter with you?

BLOWDEN: No thanks, I don't smoke. And I don't think it's good policy to smoke in the salesroom anyway.

MORRIS: Why certainly not. Abe, put them cigars away. And don't smoke, do you hear me?

ABE: Miss Cohen, please open the door and air out here. Well, well, well, so this is Mr. Blowden.

MORRIS: It's certainly a great pleasure to see you, Mr. Blowden, and if we would of known who it was that was sitting there, we would of acted very different, believe me.

BLOWDEN: I don't doubt it.

ABE: Absolutely. I said to my partner only yesterday that to be on the safe side, we should always act like there was a district representative snooping around.

MORRIS: Snooping 'round. Abe, keep still, can't you?

BLOWDEN: I suppose you know that since I've been sitting here, you've acted contrary to every suggestion Dodge Brothers make for the sale of their cars.

ABE: Maybe you're right. We wouldn't argue with you, but just the same, Mr. Blowden, you've got to admit that we sold a car.

BLOWDEN: And even that was an infringement.

MORRIS: Infringement!

BLOWDEN: Every cent of profit you've made on that car will have to go to our Newark dealer.

ACT I] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

ABE: But Mr. Blowden, we sold that car to my niece by marriage.

BLOWDEN: That makes no difference.

ABE: What do you mean, makes no difference?

MORRIS: Abe, don't argue with Mr. Blowden.

ABE: What is there to argue, Mawruss? For years now my wife's relations has been working me for operations, funeral expenses, wedding expenses and travelling expenses, and when for the first time they are actually going to hand *me* something instead of me handing *them* something, it's an infringement, sagt er, and I must turn over the profit to the Newark dealer.

MORRIS: Well that's the rule.

ABE: But did the Newark dealer give Mrs. Klein a wedding present or did I? Did the Newark dealer send to Mrs. Klein's mother when she had her appendix taken out ten years ago every week fifteen dollars for two months? Did the Newark dealer have to sit up till all hours of the night for over ten days waiting for Mrs. Klein's grandmother to pass away and she's alive and healthy today yet with an appetite like a horse.

MORRIS: Abe, could Dodge Brothers help it if your wife's relations work you for a sucker? [*To Blowden*] It's all right, Mr. Blowden, if that's the rule, we are willing to live up to it.

BLOWDEN: Then why don't you live up to all the other suggestions we make. You don't suppose we make them to annoy you. We make them to help you.

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT I

ABE: I know, but sometimes it's very annoying to be helped.

MORRIS: Abe, be quiet will you? [*To Mr. Blowden*] Just tell us what you want us to do and we'll do it.

BLOWDEN: You said that to my predecessor.

ABE: I know we did, but that feller got on our nerves. When he made a suggestion, it sounded like a traffic cop suggesting that you are arrested.

MORRIS: Well, for the things we didn't do, we should ought to get arrested.

BLOWDEN: You bet you ought. Of all the dirty, un-systematic, junky looking places of business I ever visited, this is the worst!

ABE: But we've been so busy trying to sell cars, we ain't had time to notice it.

BLOWDEN: Maybe you haven't had time to use our uniform accounting system, or answer our letters, or use our perpetual inventory system, or the zone system, or the house to house canvass, or place roadside bulletins or . . . well, what's the use talking about it. If there's anything you *have* done that we've recommended, what *is* it?

ABE: Well, we got one of them map and tack things.

MORRIS: And who took the tacks out of it? Did you, Abe?

BLOWDEN: I took them out. Most of them were over in the swamp where the packing plant is. Wasn't that it?

MORRIS: Nu, Abe, what's the use beating bushes around. This gentleman has got us dead to rights. So we may as well be prepared for the worst.

ACT I] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

ABE: And I suppose we are going to lose our franchise.

BLOWDEN: Do you think you deserve to keep it?

ABE: Well, Mr. Blowden, it's like this. I am too old a dog to learn it young tricks and when it comes to card indexes and all of them *meises*, I'll tell you frankle, Mr. Blowden, I ain't there.

MORRIS: We are 1890 model business men, and we ain't built for all these 1922 accessories.

ABE: You could put a starting and lighting system onto a horse drawn buggy, but that ain't going to make it a Rolls Royce.

MORRIS: And yet we ain't done so bad by Dodge Brothers. This winter we accepted cars near our whole allotment.

BLOWDEN: And did you sell any of them?

ABE: Not in the last two months, but in the last two months business has been so rotten you could not sell a glass of water in the Sahara desert.

BLOWDEN: But what have you done to move those cars? Have you used any of the methods we devised for your benefit? This map represents your entire campaign for trade. You didn't even send us a list of names in your territory for direct mail advertising.

[Abe and Morris exchange shrugs.]

ABE: Why should we mail letters to people we see practically every day in their homes or on the streets.

MORRIS: Everybody that got such a letter would come 'round and touch us for postage stamps on the grounds that we had so many of them we didn't know what to do with them.

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

[ACT I

ABE: In fact, Mr. Blowden, you might just so well sit down at that desk and send us a telegram that you are going to take away our franchise on us when you can tell it to us to our faces right here and now.

BLOWDEN: Do you think I'm *not* going to tell it to you?

MORRIS: We don't think nothing. We are prepared for the worst.

ABE: Just give us a little time to dispose of the cars we've got on hand and the new dealer can have an assignment of our lease here.

BLOWDEN: And why should I give you any time?

ABE: Maybe you shouldn't. After all, a district representative is only human and it's no excuse for us that what we said by accident in front of your face, we meant to say behind your back.

BLOWDEN: Well, there's no use mincing matters. You know, of course, that your contract is terminable on fifteen days' notice.

MORRIS: And I suppose this is the notice.
[Enter ROSIE POTASH.]

ROSIE: Abe, Mawruss, Listen, I just come from the house, and not five minutes ago I was sitting in the front parlor when

MORRIS: Rosie, for Heaven's sake, can't you see we are busy here?

ROSIE: But, Mawruss, listen

MORRIS: Abe, take her out of here, please.

ABE: Excuse me, Mr. Blowden, this is my wife, Mrs. Potash.

BLOWDEN: How do you do, Mrs. Potash.

ACT I] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

ROSIE: Pleased to meet you, Mister—er, but I've got to talk to my husband, Abe, listen. . . .

ABE: Mommer, *please*. This is Mr. Blowden, the district representative from Dodge Brothers.

ROSIE: I know, but. . . . Abe. . .

MORRIS: Can't you wait just a minute. Mr. Blowden is pretty near through, and so are we.

ROSIE: What!

MORRIS: He is just telling us that our contract with Dodge Brothers is terminable on fifteen days' notice, and you interrupted the notice.

ROSIE: No, no, Mawruss. You can't *do* this, Mawruss. You mustn't.

ABE: What do you mean *mustn't*, Mommer. It ain't up to us, it's up to Mr. Blowden.

ROSIE: Mr. Blowden, for God's sake, can't something be done!

MORRIS: Rosie, please keep out of this, will you?

ROSIE: But, Mawruss, you don't know what you are doing.

MORRIS: You've got to excuse my partner, Mr. Blowden, that he ain't got no more control over his wife.

ABE: What do you mean—I ain't got control? Mommer, go home.

ROSIE: I won't go home. It's the beginning of everything when the husband won't listen to the wife.

MORRIS: Rosie, for Heaven's sake, are you crazy?

ROSIE: Yow crazy! If Sam Lucas' wife would be crazy like me and stuck to her husband this terrible thing would never happened to him.

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT I

ABE: What terrible thing happened him?

ROSIE: A breach of promise suit from a lady.

MORRIS: A breach of promise suit?

ROSIE: They got Sam Lucas with a breach of promise suit yesterday. Mrs. Lucas is over at the house now. Sam is in jail and the sheriff closed the store in Cleveland.

ABE: The Sheriff closed the store! Who told you this?

ROSIE: Mrs. Lucas. She got word from Cleveland this morning. And a petition in bankruptcy has been filed.

ABE: Well, Mawruss, what did I tell you? He ain't a crook, he says. He's got misfortune, he says. The business is safe like a bank.

MORRIS: Abe, is this a time for arguments. Go over there to that map and stick them tacks into it at the proper places. Mr. Blowden, tomorrow morning, six o'clock I will have a man posting roadside bulletins all over the country.

ABE: Yes, Mr. Blowden, and we will send you a Saturday night report every Friday morning. Just give us another chance, that's all.

BLOWDEN: Why, what's the sudden change? I thought you were all prepared for the worst.

ABE: We were prepared for the worst, but the worst was worser than we thought it was.

MORRIS: Abe, Mr. Blowden ain't concerned with our private troubles.

ACT I] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

ABE: What's private about them? Everybody in Cleveland knows by this time that your brother-in-law is a crook, so why shouldn't we let Mr. Blowden in on it too. Also Mawruss, the schedules in bankruptcy will tell the world that he owes us twenty thousand dollars.

ROSIE: Everything they possess outside this business, Mr. Blowden.

ABE: And tomorrow morning, Rosie, nine o'clock, I want you to bring the hired girl and the woman what does the laundry and you see that they clean up here and clean up good.

ROSIE: I wanted to do it long since ago, and you wouldn't let me.

ABE: Well, I'll let you now, Rosie.

MORRIS: She's a wonderful housekeeper, Mr. Blowden. Tomorrow afternoon you could be able to eat off the floor here.

BLOWDEN: And how about the service station?

ABE: The service station we will go over with a fine tooth comb. In two days it won't look like a service station, it will look like the operating room of Mount Sinai Hospital.

MORRIS: And this afternoon yet, I'll write a personal letter myself to Haskins and Sells that they should send a man over at our expense to install a uniform accounting system, a perpetual inventory system and every other system that Dodge Brothers recommend from A to Z. Now come, Mr. Blowden, what are you going to do?

BLOWDEN: Well, Perlmutter, if I did what I ought to do, I wouldn't listen to you. You boys have gone the limit with us even though we do stick to a dealer till Hell freezes over.

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

[ACT I

ABE: And I suppose it's frozen.

MORRIS: Abe, keep quiet, will you? If it is frozen, who froze it?

ABE: We did and now we're skating on awful thin ice.

ROSIE: Ach, Gott!

BLOWDEN: You know as well as I do what the Dodge Brothers standard is, and if you can show me in the next sixty days that you're going to live up to it, we'll let bygones be bygones.

MORRIS: Mr. Blowden, what can we say to you?

BLOWDEN: I don't want you to say anything. I want you to act.

ABE: We will, Mr. Blowden, we will.

BLOWDEN: I don't expect you're going to do the whole thing in sixty days, but you've got to make more than a start.

MORRIS: We'll follow every suggestion we ever got from you for sales, service and advertising.

BLOWDEN: And you've got to do it in good faith.

ABE: Absolutely.

BLOWDEN: Now, I'll be back here in sixty days. In the meantime, get busy. Good-bye, Mrs. Potash.

ROSIE: Good-bye, Mr. Blowden, and thank you.

BLOWDEN: Good-bye Potash. Good-bye Perlmutter. Just do the right thing by us, and you'll find there were never easier people to do business with than Dodge Brothers.
[Exit BLOWDEN.]

ACT I] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

MORRIS: Come, Rosie, go home and get your lunch. If our twenty thousand is gone, it's gone. There's no use crying over sour milk.

ABE: Yes, and who soured it? *You* did. Our twenty thousand dollars would be still good if you didn't have such a breach of promiser for a brother-in-law.

MORRIS: Did I know he was a breach of promiser?

ABE: You should ought to know.

ROSIE: But Mrs. Lucas says he ain't a breach of promiser. All he did was to take her to a show. Now she wants you and Mawruss to act as bailers to bail him out.

MORRIS: Can you beat this? She leaves him, divorces him and sues him for alimony and now when he takes strange women to shows she wants to stick up for him yet.

ROSIE: But she says the woman wasn't strange. She was an old friend of Mrs. Lucas.

ABE: They never come too old to sue for breach of promise. [*Enter MISS COHEN.*] Nu, what is it?

MISS C: The man is here with them artificial plants and he says he can't take back the palm without an order from the store.

ABE: Who says he should take back that palm?

MORRIS: Why didn't you say to Miss Cohen that she should. . . .

ABE: *I* said. Miss Cohen, tell him to bring them plants in here—all of them—do you hear me?

ROSIE: But, Abe, what shall I tell Mrs. Lucas?

MORRIS: Rosie, for Heaven's sake, go home, *will* you!

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT I

ROSIE: But, Mrs. Lucas, Mawruss.

MORRIS: [*As man brings in artificial fern.*] Ah! We'll put that right over by the window.

ABE: By the window. W. L. Eaton of Seattle had it by the side of a Sedan.

MORRIS: Put this rubber plant by the Sedan. The Barnes Motor Company of Cleveland has rubber plants on the floor by the Sedan.

ABE: But Stratton and Bliss has got nothing but palms.

MORRIS: Well, we'll get more palms. And a few ferns like Thomas J. Doyle has got it in Detroit.

ABE: Mawruss, don't pull that feller Doyle on me. It used to be according to Hoyle. Now it's according to Doyle. Every bit of sample advertising, every scheme, system, design or form letter has got on it Doyle, Doyle, nothing but Doyle and, Mawruss, another thing I....

CURTAIN—*on any of the last three speeches, ringing down on the laugh, if any, Abe and Morris continuing to talk as curtain falls.*

ACT II

SCENE—Salesroom of the P. & P. Motors, Limited. Same as Act I, but cleaned up. New shop window, etc. Walls trellised with vines; artificial plants spread around desks, smaller and new, facing audience. Name plates on them. All the accessories of an up-to-date automobile salesroom. It is three o'clock in the afternoon. Sixty days later than close of first act. At rise, ABE and MORRIS are seated at desks. Abe flicks a piece of ash off the end of his cigar.

MORRIS: Abe, what are you doing to the rug there? Cigar ashes he's got to throw on a genuine oriental design rug.

ABE: What harm is it going to do?

MORRIS: Burn a hole in it and you'll pay forty-five dollars for a new one, not *me*. Put it out. Mr. Blowden could be here at any moment.

ABE: Then why don't he come. I've been trying to fix these stock record cards for a month now and you say I mustn't smoke.

MORRIS: What's smoking got to do with fixing that card index?

ABE: I've got to smoke or I'm no good at cards.

MORRIS: What do you mean—cards? Do you think you are playing pinochle?

ABE: No, Mawruss. I ain't playing pinochle. Once in a while I *win* at pinochle, but I never yet tried my hand at a card index and come out *even even*.

[*Morris crosses and looks over Abe's shoulder.*]

MORRIS: How do you expect to come out even with them stock record cards when you spell crank-handle with a K?

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT II

ABE: Why should I know how to spell crankhandle when I got such a Daniel Webster for a partner?

MORRIS: But suppose someone wants a crankhandle in a hurry. How is he going to get it if it's under K instead of under C?

ABE: Say, Mawruss. If we've got people working for us that don't know enough to look for crankhandle under K when they don't find it under C, then it's up to us to hire workpeople with brains and an education.

[Enter MISS COHEN.]

A-ha! The Follies of 1922!

MORRIS: What *is* it, Miss Cohen?

MISS C: The party we sent that bill for service to says it comes under the guarantee.

ABE: What comes under the guarantee?

MORRIS: [*Reads bill.*] It's that feller what runs the car without oil and the pistons seized.

ABE: It would be the same, I suppose, if for boot-legging, the whole car got seized. Miss Cohen, take a letter.

MORRIS: What are you going to say to him? You couldn't get rough to a customer, you know.

ABE: Who says I am going to get rough? Dear Sir: Is that rough? Your favor received and in reply would say we guarantee the car, not the owner, and cannot supply defective brains, even for ninety days, and oblige.

MORRIS: And that ain't rough, I suppose?

ABE: Well, if it is, you write him.

ACT II] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

MORRIS: All right, I will. Miss Cohen, take this. Dear Sir: Enclosed please find an instruction book for running Dodge Brothers cars. Kindly compare it with the one we gave you when you bought the car, and if either one or both says you shouldn't oil the car, we will be glad to cancel the enclosed bill. Otherwise kindly send us a check, and oblige. Now, what else?

MISS C: Here's the rest of the mail.

MORRIS: Abe, a letter from Blowden, the District Representative. He will be here this afternoon.

ABE: Well, I'm ready.

MORRIS: What do you mean—ready? Have you finished them cards?

ABE: There's the whole deck, and I only hope it ain't a misdeal.

MORRIS: If it is, you're the dealer. Miss Cohen!

MISS C: Yes, Mr. Perlmutter.

MORRIS: Dust the palms.

ABE: She dusted them this morning.

MORRIS: She can dust them again. Now let's see. Them roadside bulletins is up, ain't they?

ABE: Twenty of them.

MORRIS: And you mailed the new list of prospects to Detroit last week?

ABE: Some of them wasn't exactly prospects, but I mailed them.

MORRIS: And some of them others wasn't exactly prospects, neither, but we sold three touring cars and one sedan to them, didn't we? How about Saturday night reports?

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT II

ABE: As regular as clockwork.

MORRIS: And we've made a thorough house to house canvass.

ABE: I've got dog bites to show for it.

MORRIS: So long as we sell cars, I don't care how many dogs bite you.

ABE: I know you don't. Twice I got bitten by that feller's dawg what we sold the delivery wagon to.

MORRIS: What *of* it? Didn't that Irishman say if I come to see him again about a touring car he would throw me out of the window.

ABE: But he *didn't* throw you out of the window.

MORRIS: But he did buy a touring car. And that friend of his bought a sedan. Honestly, Abe, it's wonderful the business we done since Blowden made us get systematic.
[Enter ROSIE POTASH.]

ABE: Hello, Mommer. What bring *you* here?

ROSIE: Listen, Abe, could I speak to you for a minute . . . alone?

MORRIS: The place to speak to your husband . . . alone . . . is at home.

ROSIE: I mean Abe and *you* alone, Mawruss. [She nods sideways at Miss Cohen.]

MORRIS: Miss Cohen, write them letters first, and then take a pair of scissors and trim the ravellings off them palms. They're getting unstitched on the edges.

[Exit MISS COHEN. They all look after her till she is off.]

ACT II] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

ABE: Listen, Mommer, I know what you're going to say, but the girl don't mean nothing by it. They *all* show their stockings that way.

ROSIE: Show 'em *what* way?

MORRIS: Say, listen, Rosie. If you would attend to your help at home, we would attend to our help down here.

ROSIE: I don't know what you're talking about.

MORRIS: I suppose not. But if we was to get somebody in her place, the chances is she wouldn't have no more clothes on her than *this* one.

ABE: It's the fashion, Mommer. When you meet a lady today on Fifth Avenue, you couldn't tell if she's going shopping or swimming.

MORRIS: So if that's what you're here about, Rosie.

ROSIE: But I ain't here about that at all. Mrs. Lucas is over to the house.

MORRIS: What! Again?

ROSIE: She is crying like anything.

ABE: Well, if she's going to cry till we bail that feller out, she's got a long wet spell ahead of her.

ROSIE: But she don't want you to bail him out.

MORRIS: Well, what does she want us to do? Serve his sentence for him?

ROSIE: All she wants is that you should buy them parts from his friend.

ABE: What friend?

ROSIE: Mr. Plympton. You gave him the order when he was here last month and then you cancelled it.

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT II

MORRIS: Certainly we cancelled it. Them parts was counterfeit.

ROSIE: No, no. They was gen-wine.

ABE: And even if they was genwine, why should we buy them from *Plympton*?

ROSIE: Don't you see, Abe? He's such a good friend of Sam Lucas that if you buy your spare parts from him, he will lend Sam the money to pay for a lawyer.

ABE: And if we wouldn't buy from Plympton, he's such a very good friend, that he *wouldn't* lend him the money. Is that it?

MORRIS: What's the difference how good a friend he is? We wouldn't buy them parts, not if he was a lodge brother, even.

ABE: And anyhow, Mawruss, that Mrs. Lucas is *your* sister-in-law, not mine. Why does she come 'round to *my* house with her troubles?

MORRIS: Because I wouldn't have nothing to do with her. My wife wouldn't neither.

ROSIE: You wouldn't *let* her. That's wy.

MORRIS: And if Abe had any sense, he wouldn't let *you*, Rosie.

ABE: I never did let her. I told her a hundred times she shouldn't see Mrs. Lucas.

MORRIS: And this is how she minds you,

ROSIE: *Mind* him! Do you think I mind *him*?

ABE: Do you think I am such a husband that I *want* you to mind me?

ROSIE: And if you did want me to mind you, do you think I *would* mind you?

ACT II] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

MORRIS: Say, mind! *Not* mind! I wouldn't buy a cotter pin from Plympton, and that's flat.

ROSIE: *You* wouldn't buy? Ain't my husband a partner here?

ABE: Rosie, don't butt in.

ROSIE: That's right. You ain't got nerve to stand up for yourself, and when I want to help you, you turn on me.

ABE: But, Rosie, *leben*.

ROSIE: All my life I've had to egg you on or he would of made an office boy of you.

ABE: *Aber* Rosie, listen.

ROSIE: I won't listen. *He* wouldn't buy, he says. *He* does this. *He* does that. *He's* the boss, and what are you? A dummy?

ABE: Mommer!. Mommer! Don't get excited.

ROSIE: I've got a right to get excited. His wife has got that Mrs. Lucas at my house. Them two women is crying all over my Kermenshaw rug. Wait! I'll fix it! [*Rises and crosses to entrance. Calls off.*]
Here, come in, Mister-er. [*Enter PLYMPTON.*]

PLYMPTON: Good afternoon, gentlemen.

MORRIS: Rosie, what does this mean?

ROSIE: It means you are going to stick by your words, Mawruss Perlmutter. You promised this man an order. Now you're going to give it to him.

PLYMPTON: And you can have immediate delivery. I've got them parts on a truck outside.

MORRIS: You could have 'em in your pants pocket even. I wouldn't take 'em.

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT II

ROSIE: Abe, are you a boss or a shipping clerk? Speak up. What's the matter with you?

PLYMPTON: They're genuine Dodge Brothers parts, Mr. Potash.

ROSIE: He knows that already. *I* told him.

ABE: But, Mommer. Who can tell a genwine Dodge Brothers part from a counterfeit?

ROSIE: *He* says they're gen-wine, don't he?

MORRIS: I don't care if *C. H. Jennings* said they was genwine, I wouldn't be bull-dogged into buying them by that woman there.

ABE: Oh! You wouldn't, wouldn't you?

MORRIS: And if you was a man, you wouldn't be ordered around by a henpecker like that.

ABE: Is that so?

MORRIS: So go on, both of you, out of here.

ABE: Don't do nothing of the kind.

MORRIS: What?

ABE: Stay right here, Mommer, and you, too, Mr. Plympton. The other day when all he wanted was to buy cheap parts, he didn't give a nickel if they was made of lead by the F. J. Woolworth Company. Now, when it comes to helping out his own brother-in-law, he gets awful particular all of a sudden.

MORRIS: Schmooss! Abe. You don't care for my brother-in-law. You're afraid of your wife.

ABE: And you're afraid of your pocket book.

ACT II] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

MORRIS: Well, half my pocket book is yours, but thank God, your wife is your own.

ROSIE: I didn't come here to be insulted, Mawruss Perlmutter.

MORRIS: What do you mean—insulted? Can't I thank God if I want to?

ROSIE: Abe, are you going to stand there and listen to this?

ABE: I'll attend to him later. What parts do you got there, Plympton?

PLYMPTON: They're the same that you ordered.

ABE: And what's the price on 'em?

PLYMPTON: Eight hundred and twenty dollars.

ABE: All right, we'll take 'em.

MORRIS: We won't do nothing of the kind.

ABE: Put them in the service station and tell the foreman I said so.

MORRIS: Then I wash my hands of the whole thing.

ABE: Go ahead and wash. I've got to wash my hands of things you do a hundred times a day. Now you wash *your* hands for a change.

ROSIE: And will you come over to the house afterwards, Mr. Plympton?

PLYMPTON: Just as soon as I get my check.
[Exit PLYMPTON.]

ROSIE: And as for you, Mawruss Perlmutter, all I can say is that if *my* husband was like you, I wouldn't live with you a week.

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT II

MORRIS: So long as there's trains to Reno, you wouldn't have to.

ABE: Don't let him worry you, Mommer.

ROSIE: Him worry *me*? I should worry when a loafer insults me! Wife beater! Blue Bird! That's what you are.
[Exit ROSIE.]

ABE: Come, Mawruss, what's the use having all the time arguments? We absolutely have got to have them parts. I am just through with them stock record cards, and believe me, we are practically out of everything from felt washers up.

MORRIS: What do you mean—out of everything? We are all the time ordering spare parts.

ABE: And we use them, too.

MORRIS: Use them. We *eat* them. When did we buy that stock record system?

ABE: Six months ago.

MORRIS: And didn't the District Representative say it would save us hundreds of dollars?

ABE: Sure he did, but it didn't.

MORRIS: Well, why didn't it? Did we get it all mixed up or something?

ABE: Mixed up? Why, I didn't even touch it till I took these cards out this morning.

MORRIS: Well, it only goes to show what fakers them District Representatives are. Six months we've had that system. Cost us Heaven knows how much, didn't disturb it or anything, and it didn't do us a bit of good.

ACT II] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

ABE: By golly, Mawruss. If them Dodge Brothers sell us any more systems, the only thing for us to do is to hire a system hound to run them systems while we run the business.
[Enter MISS COHEN.]

MISS C: The foreman has examined those parts and they're all right. I've got a check for them here.

ABE: Come, Mawruss. No more arguments, please. I *am* afraid of my wife! I *ain't* afraid of her! What does it matter? Let's drown our differences and think only of business.

MORRIS: I *am* thinking of business.

ABE: Then I'll sign this check and we'll forget our quarrels.

MORRIS: I'm willing to forget, but when *you* forget, you always *forget* you've forgot.

ABE: Well, this time, I'll try to remember I've forgot.

MORRIS: And also don't *remind* me you've forgot, because when we have quarrels, you may forget but you never let me forget you've forgot.

ABE: [Signing check.] N'yah! [Handing check to Miss Cohen.] Give that to Plympton, and let's make an end.
[Exit MISS COHEN.]

And now, Mawruss, to show you that I mean what I say, take this.

[He hands Morris a cigar. Morris lights it and Abe also lights a cigar.]

MORRIS: [Examining the end of his cigar.]
Where did you get this?

ABE: At the funeral last Sunday.

MORRIS: The funeral! Who got buried?

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT II

ABE: Schenckman of the Schenckman Cigar Company. Who do you *think* got buried? Hoye de Monterey?

MORRIS: [*Still looking at smoking end of cigar.*] You wouldn't suspect it from this.
[*Enter BLOWDEN. He is unnoticed by Abe and Morris.*]

ABE: Wouldn't you? Well, when did *you* ever bring me anything from a funeral? Honestly Maw-russ, I don't know what comes over you lately. Nothing suits you at all. You kick, kick, kick, from morning till night. It's getting to be so nowadays that. . . . [*During the above speech, Morris notices Blowden. He hurriedly throws away his cigar and stamps on it.*]

MORRIS: Well! Well! Well! If it ain't Mr. Blowden.
[*Abe rises abruptly, too confused to throw away his cigar.*]

ABE: Hal-lo, Mr. Blowden! Well! Well! Well!

MORRIS: It is certainly a pleasure to see you, Mr. Blowden. [*Aside to Abe.*] Throw away the cigar, Chommer! [*Business of Abe throwing away cigar.*]

BLOWDEN: Well, boys, all dolled up here, aren't you?

ABE: Dolled up! All it needs is a hat-check boy and a headwaiter, and you'd think you was in the Ritz or anyhow Childs'.

MORRIS: Childs! Abe! What are you talking? Why, would you believe me, Mr. Blowden, we had an idea to make photographs of it and send it to Dodge Brothers Sales Bulletin, but we wanted to surprise you first.

ABE: And besides, the photographer wouldn't take less than three dollars.

ACT [II] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

MORRIS: Abe! Be quiet, *will* you? [*To Blowden.*]
What do you think of it, Mr. Blowden?

BLOWDEN: You've certainly improved things.

ABE: I should say! You ought to see our uniform
accounting system.

BLOWDEN: How does it work?

MORRIS: Fine!

BLOWDEN: Does your bookkeeper like it?

ABE: Naturally she kicked at first, but we raised her
wages two dollars and we told her if she wanted
to, she could bob her hair.

MORRIS: Abe! Is Mr. Blowden interested in our book-
keeper's hair? Did you see our roadside
bulletins, Mr. Blowden?

BLOWDEN: I had them checked up. They're all right.

MORRIS: Sure they're all right. A sign a mile and we've
got a lot of miles in our territory—over three
hundred dollars' worth.

ABE: And you wouldn't believe what a bunch of
them cards we sent out.

BLOWDEN: What cards?

ABE: Them cards which has printed on them "What
Becomes of the Purchase Price."

MORRIS: [*Disgusted with Abe's stupidity.*] "What Be-
comes of the Purchase Price!" Lunatic!

ABE: All right. If it ain't "What Becomes of the
Purchase Price," what *is* it?

MORRIS: *Who* comes *after* the purchase price? Schle-
miel!

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT II

ABE: Well, if it was what becomes of the purchase price, I could *tell* you, all right. Half of it goes for Roadside Bulletins and the rest for Systems.

BLOWDEN: How about these other cards?

MORRIS: You mean "What Could You Get for Your Car a Year From Today?"

BLOWDEN: What will your car be *worth* a year from today?

ABE: Of course, we don't want to contradict you, Mr. Blowden, but it ain't what your car is worth a year from today, it's what you can *get* for it.

MORRIS: And the chances is you couldn't get even *that* much.

ABE: Just the same, we sent out them cards, Mr. Blowden, and next year, when our customers try to trade in their cars, they couldn't say we didn't warn them.

MORRIS: Abe, no one asked you to deliver a lecture here. Come, Mr. Blowden, let us show you our service station.

BLOWDEN: Did you do much to it?

ABE: Do much *to* it? Mr. Blowden, if our salesroom looked six months ago like our service station looks today, we wouldn't of been ashamed to show it to *J. E. French* even.
[Enter CHIEF OF POLICE.]

CHIEF: Good afternoon, Mr. Potash.

ABE: Hello Chief. Mawruss, here's the Chief of Police.

ACT II] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

MORRIS: How do you do, Chief? Mr. Blowden, this is our Chief of Police. A good one, too. Mr. Blowden, the District Representative for Dodge Brothers.

BLOWDEN: How do you do, sir.

MORRIS: He's our boss, Chief, so if we've been busting any City ordinances again by leaving cars standing outside, don't tell him.

CHIEF: You haven't been breaking any ordinances that I know of.

ABE: Then what did we do that we didn't ought to do?

CHIEF: Mr. Potash, do you know a man who calls himself John J. Plympton?

ABE: Mawruss!

MORRIS: Abe, take Mr. Blowden into the service station. I'll be with you in a minute.

BLOWDEN: Now, just a moment, Perlmutter. Your partner seems anxious to know what all this is about.

MORRIS: He'll find out soon enough. Abe, what are you standing? Mr. Blowden is waiting.

BLOWDEN: Sure I'm waiting.

ABE: Then come along, Mr. Blowden.

BLOWDEN: I'm not waiting for you, I'm waiting for Perlmutter. How about it, Perlmutter? Do you know Plympton?

CHIEF: Why, do *you* know him, Mr. Blowden?

BLOWDEN: Certainly, I know him. He's the crook that supplies some of our dealers with counterfeit parts.

ABE: Counterfeit parts! Mawruss!

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT II

MORRIS: That's all right, Abe. We didn't know they were counterfeit.

BLOWDEN: Did you pay Dodge Brothers prices for them?

MORRIS: Not exactly.

BLOWDEN: Not exactly! You mean you paid about half our prices. Didn't you?

ABE: Well, a little more than half.

BLOWDEN: Then you must have known they were counterfeit.

CHIEF: Or stolen.

MORRIS: Stolen! Well, Abe, do you know what happens to someone who buys stolen property?

ABE: But how could I tell they was stolen? What am I—a detective?

MORRIS: Such a soft heart you've got it! Couldn't bear to see Sam Lucas sitting in prison. Well, now he'll have company—you, me and him. We can play pinochle—three handed. Murderer! What do you mean by it?

ABE: But, Chief. He didn't have nothing to do with it. It was me that bought them parts. He *told* me not to do it.

MORRIS: And when I tell him not to do something, it rolls off him like water from a duck's neck.
[Enter ROSIE POTASH.]

ROSIE: Abe, where *is* he? He didn't come over at all. Oh, excuse me. . . .

MORRIS: That's all right, Rosie. Come right in. You know these gentlemen. This is Mr. Blowden. And this is the Chief of Police.

ROSIE: The what?

ACT II] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

MORRIS: The Chief of Police. He's here on business.

ROSIE: Maybe I'd better come back.

MORRIS: Don't come back. Stay right here. It ain't often a woman gets a chance to see her husband arrested.

ROSIE: Arrested! Abe!

ABE: It's all right, Mommer. They couldn't do nothing to me.

MORRIS: Couldn't they? What are you—a judge or something?

ROSIE: But what's the matter, tell me?

MORRIS: The matter is that Plympton sold us stolen property.

CHIEF: Now, listen. You're meeting trouble half way. I don't even know you've got them parts.

MORRIS: Well, what's the use beating bushes around? We *have* got them.

ROSIE: Yes, but you didn't know they was stolen.

MORRIS: And a lot that helps us. Because if they *are* stolen, the Chief here will arrest us, and if they *ain't* stolen, they're counterfeit, and that means Mr. Blowden will take away our franchise.

ROSIE: But Mr. Blowden, listen. It's all *my* fault. I made them buy them parts.

ABE: Nonsense, Mommer. We might have bought them anyway.

ROSIE: No might have about it. They *wouldn't* have bought 'em.

ABE: Well, what is past is past, Mommer.

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT II

MORRIS: Is it? Don't fool yourself. It ain't past by a whole lot. It's just starting. First comes the indictment, then the trial, and after that, it wouldn't be past for maybe five years.

ROSIE: Five years. Abe!

ABE: Mommer, don't carry on so. He's an alarmist. If we would get eighteen months it would be big already.

BLOWDEN: Nonsense, Potash. I don't believe those parts are stolen at all. They're counterfeit.

ABE: No they ain't, Mr. Blowden.

MORRIS: Why ain't they? Miss Cohen!
[Enter MISS COHEN.]

MISS C: Yes, Mr. Perlmutter.

MORRIS: Tell the foreman to come in here and bring some of them parts with him.
[Exit MISS COHEN.]

ROSIE: And if them parts *are* counterfeit, Mr. Blowden, what are you going to do?

MORRIS: What do you *think* he's going to do?

ROSIE: But he *mustn't* do it. Look, Mr. Blowden. It ain't their fault. They worked like dawgs to clean up here, and then when it was all finished and everything, *I* made them buy them parts.

ABE: Mr. Blowden don't care about that, Rosie.

MORRIS: Maybe he don't. But I don't want him to think that we let women run our business for us, Abe. Do you suppose if Mr. Blowden's wife butted into his business, he would stand for it?

BLOWDEN: I haven't got a wife.

ACT II] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

MORRIS: You're lucky.

CHIEF: That ain't no way to talk, Perlmutter.

MORRIS: Ain't it? Well, I'll explain. You know Sam Lucas, Mr. Blowden?

BLOWDEN: Your brother-in-law that got into trouble?

MORRIS: He got us all into trouble. Well, his wife has been bothering my wife and Abe's wife we should help him out. We wouldn't do it and then this Plympton gets ahold of them and says if we would buy his rotten parts, he would stake Lucas to a lawyer.

ABE: And it would have been cheaper in the end, Mawruss, if we'd passed up them rotten parts and hired Sam Untermeyer.
[Enter FOREMAN with parts.]

FOREMAN: Did you want these, Mr. Potash?

ABE: Give them to Mr. Blowden.
[Foreman hands parts to Blowden who examines them carefully. They all watch him anxiously.]

BLOWDEN: These are genuine Dodge Brothers parts.
[The Chief, who is seated upstage, rises and exits to the street unobserved.]

ABE: [Triumphantly.] Well, Mawruss, was I right?

MORRIS: Right! Look how happy he is!

ABE: But I *was* right, wasn't I?

MORRIS: And what do you suppose you would get for being right? A medal? He was *right*, he says. For once in his life he was right and he's going to go to jail for it.

ROSIE: [Hysterically.] Abe!

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT II

ABE: [*Patting her shoulder.*] Schmooes! Mommer!
What can they do to us? I'll leave it to the
Chief here.
[*Suddenly discovers that the Chief has left.*]
Why, where is the Chief?
[*The CHIEF re-enters. He is holding Plympton
by the sleeve.*]

CHIEF: Here I am, Potash, and here *he* is. [*Sudden
change of manner.*] Now come on Plympton.
We've got the goods on you. This foreman has
confessed.
[*At the word "confessed," the Chief without
releasing Plympton grabs the foreman. They
all look at foreman, who tries to free himself
from Chief's grasp.*]

PLYMPTON: What's that?

FOREMAN: [*To Chief.*] Let go, *will* you?

CHIEF: Take it easy.

ABE: What's all this about?

CHIEF: [*To Abe.*] One minute, *please*. [*To Plympton.*]
Now come on, Plympton, tell them where you
got those parts. [*Plympton doesn't answer.*]
You won't? All right..... [*To foreman.*]
Then *you* tell them.

PLYMPTON: [*Jeeringly.*] I thought *he* did tell you.

CHIEF: He's *going* to tell us. Mr. Perlmutter, I want
to make a bargain with you. You, too, Mr.
Potash. If this foreman tells the truth, will
you agree not to prosecute him?

ABE: But what has he *done*?

CHIEF: Never mind that now. He ain't a *regular*
crook. He's an amateur with a wife and two
children.

ACT II] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

ROSIE: But what *has* he done?

MORRIS: What's the difference *what* he's done? We wouldn't prosecute him. We wouldn't prosecute anybody. We couldn't. We ain't got the nerve. We're just a couple of easy marks.

CHIEF: You bet you are. You've let this foreman steal your spare parts for over a year now, and he sold them to this crook here.

PLYMPTON: It's a lie.

CHIEF: It's the truth. And Plympton sold them *back* to you. [*To foreman.*] Ain't that right?
[*Foreman doesn't answer.*]

BLOWDEN: Come on, young fellow. This means a good deal to these men. They've said they wouldn't prosecute you. And if you tell the truth, I'll see that they don't fire you. Now then, did you steal those parts from them?

FOREMAN: Yes.

BLOWDEN: That's what I thought. Now tell me, boys, did you buy a stock record system from Dodge Brothers six months ago?

MORRIS: Yes.

BLOWDEN: Did it have a set of stock record cards and instructions how to use them?

MORRIS: Yes. It did.

BLOWDEN: Then why didn't you install them?

ABE: But we did install them.

BLOWDEN: When?

ABE: Well, we started in the day after you were here last and we just got it finished this morning.

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT II

MORRIS: We couldn't do everything at once, Mr. Blowden. You said when you was here last that all you wanted us to do was to show our good faith.

BLOWDEN: And you call it showing good faith when you bought parts from this crook?

MORRIS: Nu, Abe, you bought them parts,—not me. Can you give him any reason why he shouldn't cancel our contract on us?

ABE: He can cancel it with me, if he wants to, but not with you.

MORRIS: Why not with me?

ABE: *You* showed good faith. *You've* lived up to the rules. And if I didn't, I should be the one to suffer, not you. Come, Mommer, let's go home.

ROSIE: But, Abe, listen one moment.

ABE: Come 'round to the house after supper, Mawruss, and we'll fix about breaking up the agreement.

MORRIS: What agreement?

ABE: Our partnership agreement.

MORRIS: We wouldn't positively do nothing of the kind.

ROSIE: Mawruss!

MORRIS: You've been my partner now for twenty-five years, and it ain't your fault that you are a poor miserable weak schlemiel with no more brains and character than a bismarck herring.

ABE: Me a bismarck herring.

ACT II] PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

MORRIS: Just when the business was going good. Just when we had started in on a system, living up to the rules, selling cars and making good, you go to work and spoil everything.

ABE: Mawruss, what can I say?

MORRIS: Don't say nothing. It's all right, Mr. Blowden. Him and me started intogether, and I suppose we've got to end up together.....in the poorhouse.

BLOWDEN: Now, wait a minute. I want to tell you boys something.

ABE: We can stand it.

BLOWDEN: I haven't been near this place in thirty days, but I've kept tabs on you. You *have* lived up to the rules. You've posted your signs, made your reports, introduced a uniform accounting system and followed as many of my suggestions as you could. And what's the result. You've sold more cars than any dealer doing business around my district in a town this size.

MORRIS: And what good does that do us when we're going to lose our franchise?

BLOWDEN: Who says you're going to lose your franchise?

ABE: What?

BLOWDEN: You've learned your lesson. You know now that it pays to live up to the rules.

MORRIS: And you ain't going to take away our franchise?

BLOWDEN: Certainly not.

ROSIE: Mr. Blowden. What can I tell you? What can I do?

PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED [ACT II

MORRIS: Rosie, for Heaven's sake. What do think this *is*.....a theayter? Abe, won't you *please* be master in your own house.

ABE: Rosie, what are you crying? There! There! Miss Cohen. Take her over to the drug store and buy her for ten cents mathematic spirits of ammonia.

BLOWDEN: Well, I hope this will be a lesson to you, and now come, boys, I've wasted enough time here. Let's have a look at that service station.

CHIEF: Hold on. You haven't settled with me yet.

ABE: With *you*? If we buy stolen property and we don't know it's stolen, even though it is stolen from ourselves, are we criminals?

MORRIS: No, we're suckers.

ABE: But *you* said, Mawruss.....

MORRIS: *I* said. Go on, go on. Give me arguments.

ABE: Arguments! Quarrels. Did I hire the foreman?

MORRIS: Well, did I hire him?

ABE: Say! Say! *You* hired him! *I* hired him. What is the difference, etc., etc.
[*Curtain on lively argument.*]